THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

A Group of Poems, by George Dillon - - - -
Two Girl Poets Reviewed - - - - - - - - - -
Art and Revolution - - - - - - - - - - - - -

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These Springs Articulate

THESE springs, articulate of resurrection,
Do so persuasively recur to bring
A youth to every elemental thing
Which is one essence in fourfold dissection,
Telling what clearer clarities lie locked
Within each globe of dew, how wind and flame
Clothe variously the unapparent same
Infinity whereby the seed is rocked,—
That I forsake a fear which is the just
And dubious old property of dust,
Seeing the common couch of slaves and kings
Lonely and dark among the roots of trees
Whence I must sometime wake to other springs
From sleep which is a sustenance to these.

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Afternoon

I CAME to an orchard—blossoms blowing
On twisted branches, trees inclined
By wind, all lunging west and throwing
Their shadows parallel behind.

A frail green wave of rain swept in
Flashing the sun like broken glass;
It threaded slanting through the thin
Black boughs; I stayed to see it pass.

It hurried out across the meadows
And in a wide bright mist was gone.
I stayed to watch the orchard shadows
Crawl east an inch, then wandered on;

But very soon I heard a mutter
Along the dusty road afresh,
And when I reached the pond the water
Was silver rings in a shimmering mesh.

Pantomime for a Spring Twilight

DUMB and vaguely to the vision
Like a ghost or apparition
Or a memory or dream,
Geese shall go in a pale stream
Through the blue misty air
Down a purple pathway where
Slender tall trees rise like smoke,
Black and wavering—with one oak
Near the bottom of the hill
In whose night shall wait a still
Patient boy, watching the broad
Pale birds lunging down the road
Lightly: he shall watch and wait
Till a figure follow straight
Hard behind the glimmering geese,
Paler and more swift than these.

Conventional Song

ATOMS in disunion
Go unseen before the sun;
Wherefore heed the halted dust
Ere it scatter, for it must.
While each sense is sure, expose
Each to ascertain the rose
Whose essential shape and smell
Soon are imperceptible.
Fingers reach and palms are strong;
Since they may not linger long,
Let them linger on what's fair.
Leaves are married to the air,
Lips are mixed into the mire—
While my transient eyes desire
Let them rape the transient rose:
Girl, ere some swift autumn blows
One of us to some strange south,
Let your mouth receive my mouth.

In Regions of Late War

BECAUSE I am distracted by old rare
Recurrent magic—the dark streams of swallows,
The round new turtles tipping in the shallows,
The orchards opening to the pungent air

Of this strong pregnant land six swift years after
Where throbs spring's hushed unaltered turbulence—
And so am seizure to the high pretense
Of Beauty and her allegoric laughter,

Think not that I have therefore less decision
To probe below earth's slowly flowing crust
Where what was men and men's tall towns is dust,
Finding how hurt is sanctioned in provision,

By what sure process uncompassionate
As many men as whose torn flesh is drowned
In battle-blood on any battle-ground
That ground serenely can assimilate.

George H. Dillon

Sleet Storm

DUSK came grayly with an iron weight
That gathered from the insubstantial air
Stilly upon the boughs. Upon their spare
And delicate limbs it laid its body straight
And inescapable, an old lust bare
Of joy, and terrible with hate.

All night there was no respite where they stood,
Broken with weight, brittle with agony;
And winds made plaything of catastrophe,
And, for their pain, smote laughter through that wood,
Wherein ice-shackled branches grievously
Cried out for interlude.

O terror of snapped limbs, and dread that night,
At quiet morning had the sun but looked
An hour from heaven, we had brooked
The night its torment. The valley lay to light
A blossoming paradise. And we have looked
In vain, until the night.

Withdrawal

ALL day the rain caressed my straining trees
With slim white hands upon their naked flesh;
And winds there were to lift the boughs and thresh
Their passion on the sky, what time for ease
Love grapples love afresh.

At dusk the wind fell to a whispering,
And rain withdrawn left all the air a clear
And bitter loneliness, wherein I hear
Down all its firmament no echoing
Of that but now so dear.

Anne Singleton

Chronicle

HOW we floated our faith
On gusts of the hill wind
And walked up to the gods
With simple hand in hand

Is writ in every book
With worn letters of gold,
So much is memorized
From of old, from of old,

But what is scarcely told
And set down for the reading
Is how they all arose,
They hearing us Heaven treading,

And blew a counterblast
That watered the eyes with dust,
Tore the hands helpless,
And Heaven's highway lost,

How, driven to the sea,
We look in every port
For trade winds to blow
And take us in escort.

Worms, Wind and Stone

BEAUTY that was and broke in two
I cannot piece together.
Again and again I have asked the worms
For what weighed but a feather

And again and again have they given me
A measure of whited bone.
Keep, worms, your weighted treasury;
I shall ask of wind and stone.

But all the winds are gone astray
And cannot find that moon
Nor blow into the tree and say,
"Beauty is coming soon."

And all the stones are wound in moss
And have a muffled eye
That caught no glimpse of the beautiful
Steps that hurried by.

Edward Sapir

Middle Class

PINK-RINGED and damp, thru chilly corridors
The earthworms crawl with their faint clammy sound:
The pallid people of the middle ground.
They touch their sunless roofs, their sunless floors—
That is their universe, their good abodes.
Earth gives them their black daily bread; 'tis sweet,
Doubtless, to them: at least they eat and eat,
'Twixt Love's hermaphroditic episodes.
Beneath them—far beneath them—granite boulders
And ridges lie tremendous; and thereunder
The ultimate unimagined earth-fire smoulders;
And far above them with strange fitful thunder
Gods break their dusky skies, invade their nook,
And crucify poor worms to bait a hook!

E. Merrill Root

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Art and Revolution

(Mammonart. By Upton Sinclair. Published by the Author, Pasadena, California, 1925.)

"IN My Father's House there are many Mansions," said one of Mr. Sinclair's predecessors in the economic field; and that seems to me worth bearing in mind. But to Mr. Sinclair the House of Life is simpler than that: it is an apartment of two rooms, and if you are not helping him clean up the dirty one, you must be enjoying yourself in the other, along with the loafers and sinners and conspirators. This unhappy bias prevents his essay in an economic interpretation of art and literature from achieving the transvaluation of values one is led to expect.

All art is propaganda, according to Mr. Sinclair, art being "a representation of life, modified by the personality of the artist, for the purpose of modifying other personalities, inciting them to changes of feeling, belief and action"; and propaganda "effort directed systematically toward the gaining of support for an opinion or course of action." And, furthermore, great art occurs "when propaganda of vitality and importance is put across with technical competence in terms of the art selected." This implies a standard of vitality and importance: "let the artist . . . find a real path of progress for the race; let him reveal new impulses for men to thrill

to, new perils for them to overcome, new sacrifices for them to make, new joys for them to experience."

Overlooking the fact that this test takes progress for granted—(a point on which as sound an economist as Mr. Shaw is somewhat dubious), overlooking the fact that it stresses novelty perhaps more than is meet, accepting the definition as best we may, we are moved to wonder how much vitality and importance there is in

"O western wind, when wilt thou blow
That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, that my love were in my arms,
And I in my bed again!"

"Ay, Mother, Mother,
What is this Man, thy darling kiss'd and cuff'd
Thou lustingly engenderst,
To sweat, and make his brag, and rot,
Crowned with all honours and all shamefulness? . . .
. . . Yet is he successive unto nothing,
But patrimony of a little mould,
And entail of four planks."

"Bitter chill it was,
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold,
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:"

"The arras rich with horseman, hawk, and hound
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor."

"This season's daffodil,
She never hears
What change, what chance, what chill,
Cut down last year's,
But with bold countenance,
And knowledge small,
Esteems her seven days' continuance
To be perpetual."

"'I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will miss or hit the moon.
It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she."

" . . . the syringa hung
Stayed by the weight of flowers in the moving morning."

Your own heart and Mr. Sinclair may not give you the same answer.

In matters of technical competence Mr. Sinclair is, I think, a critic none too sound. He has a good healthy ear for rhetoric and eloquence—*Vox, et praeterea nihil.* Shelley and Shakespeare and

Swinburne move him; (curiously enough, his favorite adjective for the torrential and fluent style is "golden.") I doubt whether he would suffer as gladly the difficult obscurity of Browning, the simple madness of Blake, the eccentric assonances of Emily Dickinson. For line upon line, precept upon precept, of his technical criticism, see his analysis of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan;* or the chapter where, in all seriousness, he sets side by side Milton's sonnet on the Piedmont massacre, and an opus of—O frubjious day!—Mr. Clement Wood!

If Mr. Sinclair's thesis is to have any value, it must lie in a treatment free from superficiality, and here, I think, is where he bungles his own cause. I should like at least a paragraph to discuss his treatment of the Romans,—how unfair he is to Virgil, for instance; how careless in his analogies. He sees, for example, that the last century of the Republic is most amazing in its resemblance to our own times, but the poets of that day, Lucretius and Catullus, elude him entirely. And there was Ovid, whose banishment from the imperial court should certainly have rendered him attractive from the partisan point of view . . . These things are really none of our business; what we are concerned with, strictly speaking, is English poetry, and here, too, I think, Mr. Sinclair has directed his own defense very maladroitly. He never mentions Will Langland, for instance, who wrote *Piers Plowman*; nor James Thomson, author of *The City of Dreadful Night.* He does not seem to care much for *Tiger, Tiger, burning bright,* but he might have mentioned that William Blake who said

> *"I will not cease from mental fight,*
> *Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,*
> *Till we have built Jerusalem*
> *In England's green and pleasant land."*

And if I had been writing a book called *Mammonart,* somewhere in it I should surely have found room to call Thomas Hood's *Song of the Shirt* a great poem!

The economic interpretation of art is a field to be ploughed: pity that Upton Sinclair has succeeded only in throwing stones across it.

Students of revolution might as well face, once for all, the bitter truth: for their purposes, the artist is of no earthly use. He is a product of society, never a member of it. In the House of Life his manners are abominable: he turns his furious eye upon his hosts,

watches their every move, and tells the world what he sees. He is spectator, not participant: or if he plays the game, he wants to be right guard, left end and fullback all at once. What keeps him going in an incredible loneliness of soul is the delusion of his own importance, a doubt and a hope and a faith that he alone has the wise brain, the sentient heart, the articulate voice, the seeing eye; that he alone matters far above and beyond more earthy humankind. God pity him, suppose he does, what then? Does that qualify him as a soldier in a Great Cause? A damned mutinous rebel of a soldier, I am afraid. He frets and chafes under the stupid restraint, the dull indifference of the existing order; what happens to him under the chilled-steel discipline essential to movements of revolt? Who says Revolutionist, says Puritan: and there is a great gulf fixed. Across that gulf Shelley and Lenin may—perhaps—contemplate each other with calm and admiring eyes; nearer, they can only be in each other's way. Best that both know it, and avoid bad blood between them.

This book review began with a quotation from one revolutionary, and it ends with one from another: "Life is older than liberty. It is greater than revolution. It burns in both camps. And Life is what I love."

Rolfe Humphries

Within an Orchard

A Far Land: Martha Ostenso, Seltzer, N. Y.
A Tree in Bloom: Hildegarde Flanner, The Lantern Press, San Francisco

HERE is a difference of flowering fragilities. Martha Ostenso's poems have the delicacy of very young peach trees on which, in their first spring of fruitfulness, the vivid blossoms are rare. Hildegarde Flanner's trees are indeed in full bloom, but the star-white boughs are tremulous with silence, fragile under the weight of an exquisite mystery.

Martha Ostenso's imagination plays with the usual materials of the youthful poet: first rain, first snow, witches, leprechauns, fays, romance. Her poems are most successful, I think, when her touch is lightest and most whimsical. *"The Unicorn and the Hyppogrif"* are fancifully nice:

"Pity the Unicorn
Pity the Hyppogrif,
Souls that were never born
Out of the land of If."

There is good selection of detail in the Spring poem, "Blue":

"Five robin's eggs,
Two beetle's legs,
A blue bird's wing
And a crocus ring;
A thimble of rain
And a bluer stain
In a blue snail's shell:"

But the poet's awareness and delicate perception are best shown in "Before Storm" which I quote entire:

"Now the tawny unicorn
Beats a path around the moon,
On the ashen air is borne
A twanging little tune,
A sudden lonely hollow note,
A lofty pool of pausing sound,
Where hot and numb the shadows float
Upward from the ground.
Across the misty moor there flies
Pale as snow and thin as air
With a ghost in both his eyes
A solitary hare."

Surely these are lovely young trees, these poems, trees to which a year or so will bring both more color and deeper significance.

In Hildegarde Flanner's poetry there is no immaturity, only a deliberate withdrawal from understanding of Beauty as Fleshliness, a deliberate unwinding of sheer veils from Beauty as Spirit.

"There is a burning wilderness in me
Within this fragile territory, I.
God, like a moon, is waning and too high.
There is no nearness left in Deity.
Thus, is it thus Life teaches me to see,
To lift my eyes from myself to the sky,
To turn from my own arms wherein I lie
And kiss the swift feet of Reality?"

The *"Reality"* whose fleeting feet this poet would kiss is the Mystic Ideal, Oneness, the Unattainable, from which she prays:

"Tranquility alight upon my soul
Like a great bird upon a luminous bough."

And if one feels that this "burning wilderness" is limited by its "fragile territory," one must believe it limited to a keener ecstacy in its aloofness.

"How mystical my flesh and without fire—
O love, I lie as snow upon your heart.
Circle me not with fierce arms, for desire
Has in me no abiding and no part."

"No abiding." The one fleshly image of the entire volume becomes a sacred memory.—

"I who falter in the snare
Of your amber-coloured hair,
Sacredly could not forget
Skin that chokes like mignonette."

Miss Flanner is a superb technician, as her sonnets in the Quaker Language indicate. But here, as throughout the book, we are aware not so much of the flawless verse as of the pervading spirit. Into the Quaker spirit she reads her own exquisite detachment:

"Thee is obscured, beloved, as though I
Behold thy body through a ghost between."

Tragedy for her is spiritual uncertainty:

"Upon whose soul does she at last
Coldly break her body's fast?"

Death does not daunt this poet, for here, when the last veil is put aside, she may find the Reality she seeks

"Put out the mourners from your heart,
And bid your still soul rise.
It is not death, but only sleep
That fastens down your eyes.

Return, O Galilean days,
Judean hands, return!
Make bloom the lily in the ash
Of this neglected urn."

If she is afraid to open her eyes, to actuality as most girls know it, it is because she may lose her fragile dream:

"If I should open my eyes
Would life still be
Resounding days of singing columns,
Tall nights of wistful towers?
And would the sweet immeasurable earth
Chant beneath my feet?
Could I still sleep beside the moon
And wake to silence coming like a flock of swans
Upon my consciousness?"

This is the Vision which haunts her always, the Desire above all desires, this worship of still loveliness, this communion with Silence.

"Pale grey and yellow limbs,
That never move
But step unceasingly in beauty."

"Silence braided her fingers in my hair
And put her ankles close to mine in bed.
She hushed a silver sparrow in his song
And laid against my throat her fragile head."

and finally:

"There is no silence lovlier than the one
That flowers upon a flowering tree at night.
There is no stillness known beneath the sun
That is so strange to bear, nor half so white.
If I had all that silence in my heart,
What yet unfinished heavens I could sing!"

Is the flowering tree of Silence fragile too? Do warm rain and wind destroy it that there may be fruit? Or is this a rare jewel tree, a Tree of Heaven, safely remote?

Eda Lou Walton

NOTES AND COMMENT

Undue modesty, or unseemly envy perhaps, has up to now inhibited editors of *The Measure* from reviewing in our pages *Sunrise Trumpets,* the book of our own Joseph Auslander. Readers who deplore this omission are referred to the April number of *Voices,* which is devoted, in practical entirety, to the poetry of Mr. Auslander, and critical appreciation of his work. We are grateful to Mr. Vinal for this generous tribute to a rival-editor, if fellow-poet, and trust he has prophecied truly in regard to the Pulitzer Poetry Prize for 1924.

We have heard from Howard Parker, whose poem in the March number was very exciting to us. He writes: "I came to Canada in 1914, when a child, and have lived there continuously, since.—*We Two Shall Move to Fairy Places* is one of the first poems I wrote. —It was written at the age of fifteen.—It may be of interest to know that I have had but one term of schooling, that is, of the school sort!"

Leonie Adams will be active editor during June, July and August.

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